

## **Preparing Cadets for Encampment - Squadron Commander's Guide**

Although encampment is all about training, it is not a boot camp. Squadron Commanders *must* ensure that cadets attending encampment for the first time (cadet basics, as they are known at encampment), have adequate training at their home squadron. We want to set them up for success not failure. When possible, cadets who previously attended encampment as flight sergeants or flight commanders on encampment cadet staff should conduct this important training. Former encampment TAC Officers are also an excellent source of information as to the type of training needed.

Encampment *is not* the place for cadets to learn the following for the first time.

- How and whom to salute
- Recognition of different grade insignia
- Proper wear of the CAP uniforms
- The importance of military bearing, i.e. How to stand at attention
- Basic drill maneuvers
- CAP grooming standards
- Basic personal hygiene and self care
- Boots and shoes are painful when not broken in

Completion of the Curry Achievement is a prerequisite for attending encampment. *Proper* preparation for this first CAP achievement *should* cover all of the items on the list above. However, during the first few days of previous encampments, observations by senior and cadet staff indicate that completion of the Curry Achievement, alone, *does not* adequately prepare cadets. With a minimum passing score of the Curry exam and drill test, cadets know only about 70 percent of the material tested and they have almost no practical experience at applying this knowledge.

Here are *some* examples of problems occurring at COWG Encampment in 2008.

- **Uniforms** - missing insignia, sewn insignia improperly placed, missing flight caps, missing flight cap insignia, missing BDU caps, missing belts. These items are not available at encampment and the staff does not have the time or capability to deal with these issues. The squadrons must deal with this before encampment.
- **Military Bearing** - new cadets do not have a grasp of the importance of military bearing. They do not know how to stand at attention. On the first few days, one of the more common things heard from the flight sergeant is - "*Stop Looking Around*"!
- **Grooming Standards** - *Haircuts! Haircuts! Haircuts!* Staff does not have time to pull cadets from training in order to go to the barbershop for haircuts. Additionally, some staff paid for cadet's haircuts because they showed up needing a haircut *and* without money. Cadets will be sent home prior to in-processing if hair is not in accordance with grooming standards. If a cadet is dropped off with no money by someone other than a parent, encampment staff will give them the option of calling home to be picked up or having their haircut by our staff (most likely shaved).
- **Drill** - Too many cadets show up with almost no drill experience. Simply passing the Curry drill examination *is not* adequate. Cadets need practice.
- **New boots and/or new shoes** - *Do not do this!* Break in boots and shoes. Blisters are the most common medical issue at encampment and in most cases, are caused by shoes and/or boots not being broken in properly. *This happens every year!*

Why are these things important to know *before* coming to encampment? Encampment is very fast-paced with very little personal time; most of the time is spent in organized classes and activities. Encampment  
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Flight Sergeants and Flight Commanders have little time to give *individual* attention to cadets who do not know the basics of being a cadet.

Squadron Commanders should be proactive in preparing cadets. Please do not fall into the trap of thinking that while at encampment, the cadets are "out of sight - out of mind". They are *your* cadets and their performance reflects on *your* squadron. Try to provide training classes *and* practice on the following topics. Manual references are in parenthesis.

- CAP Customs and Courtesies (Cadet Leadership manuals and CAPP 151)
  - Saluting - When, where, how
  - Verbal greetings when passing officers (but keep moving)
- Proper wear of the CAP uniform (CAPM 39-1)
  - Appropriate jewelry for male and female cadets
  - No sunglasses in formation
  - Learn basic ironing skills. Irons and boards are usually available.
  - Blues
    - ◆ Appropriate grade insignia on *both* collars (no CAP cutouts, should be at least a C/Airman since Curry Achievement is required)
    - ◆ Proper placement of insignia (measure everything)
    - ◆ Wear of flight cap (placement on head)
    - ◆ Gig Line
    - ◆ Appropriate style white tee shirts (no tie - V neck, with tie - crew neck)
    - ◆ Purchase and use shirt garters if possible
    - ◆ Placement of sleeve creases
    - ◆ Shining shoes
  - BDUs
    - ◆ Appropriate grade insignia on *both* collars
    - ◆ Proper placement of patches and insignia (measure everything)
    - ◆ Wear of BDU or baseball style caps (placement on head)
    - ◆ Blousing BDU trousers (blousing bands recommended, not the ties in trousers)
    - ◆ Rolling BDU sleeves (expected at encampment)
    - ◆ Tucking in combat boot laces
    - ◆ Appropriate tee shirts with BDUs (crew neck, appropriate color)
    - ◆ Boot shining
- Basic drill maneuvers (AFMAN 36-2203 Drill and Ceremonies)
  - Fall In (automatic Dress Right Dress and automatic Ready Front)
  - Attention (know the importance of the position and remaining motionless)
  - Parade Rest
  - At Ease
  - All facing movements
  - Present and Order Arms
  - Flanking movements
  - To the Rear March
- CAP grooming standards (CAPM 39-1)
  - Appropriate haircuts/hairstyles
- Personal hygiene and self care (basic first aid, cleanliness)

In addition to this training, encampment staff suggests that commanders accomplish the following.

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1. Conduct inspections of ***all*** uniforms complete with insignia, before encampment. If something is wrong, require the cadet to correct the situation. Insist on compliance with every standard!
2. Devote part of a regular meeting to determine if cadets have everything on the required items list. Have them pack their bags and bring everything to a meeting just before encampment. Have members of your cadet staff inspect and check everything. This gives the basic cadet an opportunity to get everything together early and to discover if anything is missing. Well prior to encampment, stock up on insignia, BDU caps and other difficult to obtain items at your squadron so that you can handle last minute issues. This is also a good time to re-emphasize the importance of complying with the "no contraband" requirements.
3. Discuss the concept of homesickness with cadets. This will be some cadets' first experience away from home and family. Discuss the resources available at the encampment to help in these situations. (Chaplain, TAC Officers, fellow squadron members.)
4. Explain to your cadets what it is like to live with little privacy. This can be a quite a shock to some. They also need to understand that they will not be able to select roommates. This can be a disappointment for cadets who plan for specific roommates.
5. Invite parents of basic cadets to a squadron meeting and brief them on what to expect from encampment. Let parents know that encampment is challenging and is planned to be somewhat overwhelming in the beginning. Tell parents that their sons/daughters must learn the importance of teamwork and time management before they will begin to "learn the system" at encampment. The first few days may be difficult, but most cadets adjust to the routine by day three.
6. Some parents may receive a phone call from a cadet wanting to come home. Advise parents to encourage their son or daughter to stay. Parents should avoid allowing their cadet to come home because they miss their cadet. Often, asking the cadet to stick with it for "one more day" is all that it takes to help them make it all the way through encampment. Usually, less than one percent of cadets leave encampment early.
7. Be certain that parents understand that they should not leave home for any extended period, such as a vacation, unless they designate a family member or friend who will pick up their son or daughter in case they need to leave encampment early for any reason. This alternate emergency contact information ***must*** be included with encampment application paperwork.
8. Encourage parents to attend the graduation ceremony and parade. Encampment can be a life-changing event for cadets and, although they are usually ready to go home at the end, they are always incredibly proud of what they have accomplished. The graduation and parade is something they will want to share with parents.

One final question always comes up for Squadron Commanders. *How long should a cadet be a member before attending encampment?* It depends on the cadet. Age, commitment, attitude, and maturity are all factors to consider. Encampment attendance is one of the most important factors in cadet retention. Encourage cadets to attend encampment at their ***first*** opportunity ***if*** they have the appropriate uniforms and basic skills discussed in this guide. Unfortunately, and all too often, cadets that do not attend encampment at the first opportunity are not members when the next opportunity comes.

Erin L. Ashby  
Commander 2009 COWGE

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